

Erasmus Darwin. For seven years Ronsard
set himself
to learn the secret

du haut honneur d'Athenes
Et du savoir de Tantique Rome,

The fruits of that long apprenticeship are
shown in borrowings from Homer, Pindar, Anacreon,
Mimnermus,
Theocritus, Plato, the Anthology, Lucretius,
Catullus,
Virgil, Horace, Tibullus, Propertius, Ovid,
Ausonius,
Petrarch, Ariosto, Sannazar, Bembo,
Pontano, Navagero,
Flaminio, Secundus, Marullus, as well as
from Jean de
Meung, Jean Lemaire, Mellin de Saint-Gellais
and Marot
himself. Generations of scholars have sorted
and labelled
all this stolen property; no doubt much
more of it will
never be identified. It is amusing that even
the learned
and delightful Jusserand should pick out of
the deserts of
the *Frاندade*, as a lovely gem of Ronsard's
own 'qui n'a
rien d'antique', his comparison of two
silent lovers to
two mutely standing trees which is really
borrowed from
Valerius Flaccus, who borrowed it in his
turn from
Apollonius Rhodius. A modern poet who
dared to be so
derivative would be treated as a complete
fraud. The less
real originality we have, the more touchy we
grow about
it. But even Ronsard did not escape
unscathed from the
danger of just that false elaboration which
he despised in
mediaeval writers, when he stoops to
phrases uke 'les
Amycleans flambeaux' for Castor and
Pollux; or, for
poets, *ceux qui font Tamour aux Neuf

Soeurs'. A
hyacinth is not really prettier disguised as
la lettre teinte
au sang Du Grec marry pour les armes'; and
few without
assistance can identify 'the daughter of the
nephew of
Adas' as Fame. Nor has posterity accepted
his attempt to
enrich them with new coinages, in imitation
of Greek,
like 'desli-soucy, donne-vie, oste-soin', or 'tu-
g^ant', or
'desrobe-fleur avettes'. In imitating Pindar,
again, Ronsard